



Bob Weibel

Music critic finds his way to mountain

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

review

The Dresden Staatskapelle was one of the recent casualties of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra work stoppage.

But, as the saying goes, if the mountain wouldn't come to Mohammed, then Mohammed would come to the mountain. Fortunately, neighboring Toledo hosted this distinguished orchestra at its Museum of Art last week, so the mountain was only an hour's drive.

The event took place in the museum's Peristyle Hall. Containing about 1,450 seats, this hall, surrounded by columns, but with no balcony, is very spacious and tends to create the illusion of an outdoor setting.

The Staatskapelle can reportedly be traced back to as early as 1548 and, in more recent times, has been led by such distinguished conductors as Bohm, Kempe, Busch and Kellner.

Whatever an orchestra's tradition may be, it is only as good as its present musicians. The Staatskapelle has every reason to be proud in this respect.

The major works on the program were two symphonies — No. 40 by Mozart and No. 1 by Brahms. In between was a Romance for Cello and Orchestra by Richard Strauss.

Hans Vonk, conductor of the Staatskapelle, has been also appoint-

ed principal conductor of the Dresden State Opera.

The Romance for Cello and Orchestra, an early obscure work by Strauss, was performed with Jan Vogler as soloist. This was the weakest aspect of the program. Given the masterful works by this composer, with his tone poems and daring harmonies, I found this piece to be rather boring in its simplistic and unimaginative themes.

Vogler, who is presently principal cellist of the Staatskapelle, may be an extremely gifted musician, but from such a mediocre piece this would be hard to tell. If one wished to stick with Strauss, a work like "Don Quixote" would have been far more appropriate.

There are good performances of the symphonies on the program, to be sure. But one seldom encounters a performance in which the music comes as natural to the musicians as breathing. The Mozart symphony had a polish to it that was there, seemingly with little effort. The minuet was played at a considerably slower tempo than we, on this continent, are accustomed to, but without appearing to drag.

In the Brahms symphony, the first

movement sounded somewhat benign. This could be attributed to the acoustics, which are reasonably good, but not a match for Orchestra Hall. As the work progressed, however, I became more aware of an intensity that was intrinsic to the music, the type that emerges and conquers the audience without external sweat.

Traveling to Dresden to hear the Staatskapelle may not be practical for most of us, but hearing this fine orchestra in our vicinity may well be the next best thing.

The Toledo Museum of Art's 1987/88 Peristyle Series continues on Friday, Dec. 11, with the Swingle Singers. Other programs are: Saturday, March 5, English Chamber Orchestra, and Thursday, March 31, Andre Watts, piano.

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All in all, it's a pleasure 'Second Time Around'

Performances of the Plymouth Theatre Guild production of "Second Time Around" by Henry Denkler continue through Saturday at Central Middle School in Plymouth. For ticket information call 451-1853.

No doubt an endless number of storylines could be spun off playwright Sammy Cahn's memorable if somewhat sentimental line, "Love is lovelier the second time around."

The Plymouth Theatre Guild opened the season with playwright Henry Denkler's version, simply titled, "Second Time Around." Despite some uneven performances, director Clemmie Cybert has fashioned a fairly entertaining evening of theater.

First of all, Denkler has crafted a clever comedy about love in our Golden Years. Here's the setup: The spouse has died, you're collecting Social Security — then suddenly one day across the room in the doctor's office your eyes meet — and you get that old feeling. You're in love again. Courtship is wonderful. Unfortunately, telling the kids turns into a disaster (especially the part about living together instead of getting married, to avoid losing Social Security money).

Connie Fox and Walter Kerwick turn in good performances as geriatric lovers. She is especially charming when she says, "I just want to do all the things women dream of doing in the first marriage."

Rick Boldman has a way with sarcastic lines as he puts down his mother's suitor as a "dirty old white-haired lecher."

Karen Miller would be better with a more natural delivery, but she has her moments as a daughter who cannot come to grips with her father's new love: "You never took my mother on a cruise to Jamaica!"

Tom Hinks is outstanding as her husband, a psychiatrist who analyzes everyone and cures nobody. The whole cast could use more of his comic panache and stage presence.

Also appearing as assorted relatives and lovers are Camilla Longley, Paul Cybert and Laurel Twichell.

The set, while sparsely decorated, is tastefully done.

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